

EXAMPLE OF TEACHING THE TRAIT OF VOICE BASED ON A FIELD TRIP

Innovative Methods for Teaching ESL Writing Application Assignment

Name: Mariah Taylor Grade: Fourth Grade SUBJECT : Language Arts

- **Identify levels of English language proficiency and content.**
According to WIDA, my students' language proficiency ranges from Developing to Reaching.
- **What is a topical understanding or overarching understanding you are trying to teach?**
Experienced writers incorporate voice into their written work. This means they speak directly to the reader in a way that is unique, compelling and engaging. They are also aware and respectful of the audience and the purpose for writing.
- **What were the content and language objectives? (Since this is a literacy task, you may combine the content and language objective(s), if desired.)**
Student partners will use a graphic organizer to orally discuss and write about an experiment they observed on a recent field trip to the Underwriters Laboratory (UL.) Students will incorporate elements of voice into their written work when they write about the experiment from the perspective of the product that was being tested at the UL.
- **Explain the writing activity, including an explanation of how you modeled the writing skill(s) and how you applied (or will apply in future activities) Gradual Release of Responsibility.**
Last week, as part of their science unit on electricity, my fourth grade students went on a field trip to the Underwriters Laboratory (UL) in Northbrook, IL. During the field trip, students learned about how UL tests electrical products for safety before they are sold publicly. Using this experience and what they've learned in Science as background knowledge, students will write a short paragraph about one thing they saw and learned during the field trip.

Part 1

When students got back from the field trip, we brainstormed a list of the products they saw being tested at the UL. Students brainstormed that the UL tests hairdryers, refrigerator doors, garage doors, extension cords, coffee makers, outdoor lamps, and microwaves. I wrote the names of these products on note cards, making doubles of each card. Next, I duplicated the graphic organizer below on large chart paper. I explained that we'd be writing about what we learned from the perspective of the product being tested. Using the microwave as an example, I modeled how to complete the graphic organizer. During my modeling, I asked questions aloud to myself about how I could make my writing more interesting and compelling to the reader. Next, students got together with a pre-chosen partner to complete the graphic organizer. Students chose one of the 6 remaining products randomly. Since there were two note cards for each product, there were two sets of partners writing about each product. After giving students 20 minutes to complete the organizer, students met with the other pair of partners that had the same product. Students shared their ideas with each other and added to their graphic organizer.

Part 2

Using the overhead, I shared a rubric for incorporating voice into writing. I explained the three criteria, Interaction, Element of Surprise and Audience Awareness. Using the descriptors for the Experienced Writer, I modeled how to incorporate a strong voice by writing a story from the perspective of a microwave. Instead of just writing it myself, I used Numbered Heads, asking

students to come up with strong sentences to add to the paragraph. Below is the paragraph that students and I wrote together:

“What happens when metal is placed in a microwave?” I heard the old tour guide, Mr. Cox ask a group of approaching fourth grade students. “Oh no”, I thought. “Is this happening to me again?” Every day, students come to the Underwriters Laboratory to learn how products are tested for safety. And every day, students eagerly watch me catch on fire. Let me explain. See, you can’t put metal in a microwave. If you do, it will spark and then I’m on fire AGAIN. At the UL, they help students learn not to put metal in me by showing them what happens if you do. If for some ridiculous reason metal is placed in me, do not open my door. Just turn me off and wait for the fire to put itself out. Since my door has a great seal, it won’t allow oxygen in to fuel the fire. I don’t know how much more I can take of this, being put on fire every day. I guess it’s all for the good of education. Okay, here we go. 5...4...3...2...1... FIRE!

After writing this example together, students got back with their partners and worked together to write a paragraph for their product. When students were ready, they met with the other set of partners that had the same product and shared their paragraphs. Students were given sentence frames to provide feedback to each other. Finally, students practiced reading their paragraphs aloud and made changes to their writing based on their peers’ feedback. The next step will be for students to publish their writing and to share it with their peers via the classroom blog.

- **Did you incorporate differentiation for a range of learners or did you use a writing strategy with a homogeneous group?**

In order to scaffold students’ skills, I paired a higher skilled learner with an average learner and an average learner with a lower skilled learner. I made sure to meet with my lower learners during their partner time to support them in their writing.

- **Were any cooperative structures incorporated into the activity?**

Students worked with partners to complete the graphic organizer and write the paragraph. I used Numbered Heads to generate a writing model. Students met with each other at each stage of the writing to share their ideas and to scaffold skills.

- **Evaluate the experience. What worked well? Is there anything you would change?**

My students LOVED this writing topic. Since they had just gotten back from the field trip, they were excited to share what they had learned from their experience. The graphic organizer and the whole-group modeling worked very well. Numbered Heads was a useful cooperative group strategy that allowed students to add to the model without feeling too much pressure. I think that allowing student partners with the same product to meet and give feedback to each other was both motivating and useful to the students. Students used the sentence frames and were able to give useful feedback to each other. I witnessed a lot of good discussions and students eagerly updating their graphic organizers. In the future, I would generate a list of useful scientific vocabulary words for my students to use in their writing. Words, such as test, electrify, hypothesis, current and volts, will help make their writing stronger and better aligned with the content area of Science.

See graphic organizer, next page.

Name _____ Date _____

Writing Prompt:

Pretend you are a product that gets tested at the UL.
Why were you being tested? How did you teach the
kids watching you about safety?



Directions: Work with a partner to plan words and phrases that you will use to describe this experience.

Product _____	
Actions (What was being done to you? What were the students doing?)	
Sights, Sounds, Smells	
What did you teach the students watching you?	
Your thoughts and feelings...	

Writing Rubric – Focus on Voice

** This rubric was created from information found on the InterActive Six Trait Writing Process website (<http://senior.billings.k12.mt.us/6traits/>.)*

	Writer Interaction	Element of Surprise	Audience Awareness
Experienced Writer	The writer speaks directly to the reader in an interesting and creative way.	The writer reveals who they are and what they think in a surprising or delightful way.	The writer is aware and respectful of the audience and the purpose for writing.
Intermediate Writer	The writer speaks in a pleasant, but not personal matter. The writer seems sincere, but not fully engaged or involved.	The writer includes only one or two moments of surprise or delight.	The writer seems aware of an audience but does not match the style of writing to the audience.
Inexperienced Writer	The writer speaks in a monotone and boring way.	The writer does not include any surprises. The writing is very predictable.	The writer does not seem to care who the audience is.

Peer Feedback

I like how you included _____ in your story.

When you wrote _____, it reminds me of _____.

When you wrote _____, it made me wonder _____.

Why did you write _____?

Did you ever think of including _____ in your story?